The Builder.

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GREAT efforts to ameliorate the condition and raise the character of the working classes are, undeniably, being made in England at this moment, and will, there is every reason to believe, ultimately effect much good. The direction which these efforts are taking seems a right one, and if those whom it is sought to benefit embrace warmly and ingenuously the means which are offered to them, and strive vigorously to elevate themselves, the most important results to all classes of society will follow, and in a rapidly increasing ratio. Without their own co-operation—(self-discipline and education, the acquirement of habits of regularity and foresight)—nothing effectual will be done: with it, and extended knowledge, on the part of the upper classes, of our mutual duties and rights, it is scarcely possible to say how much.

The provision of well-ordered homes, of neat, commodious, and healthy lodgings, as one most important first step, we have long and anxiously advocated, and have given our humble aid to every well-meant endeavour to further it.*

With this feeling we are desirous to bring prominently before our readers the large lodging-house in Spitalfields, opened on Wednesday the 12th, by the "Metropolitan Association for Improving the Dwellings of the Industrious Classes," under the title of THE ARTISANS' HOME: and a range of dwellings for married people closely adjoining, but not yet quite finished. These are situated in Albert-street, Spicer-street, a short distance to the north of the Whitechapel-road, and have been constructed under the superintendence of Mr. William Beck, architect, by Mr. S. Grimsdell, the builder. Five architects, it may be remembered, furnished designs in competition, and we gave, in our sixth volume (p. 387), a review of their several characteristics. The "Home" provides accommodation for 234 single men,† each (to speak generally, in the first instance) having a separate sleeping compartment, 8 feet by 4 feet 6 inches,—the use of a spacious and handsome coffee-room, kitchen, a lecture-room, and a reading-room.

But let us go a little into detail. The building is five stories in height. It occupies three sides of a square the whole height: the space inclosed by the three sides is covered to the height of the ground floor only, and forms there the coffee-room. The basement contains baths and washhouses, with the requisite appurtenances,‡ cellarage, and space for workshops. On the ground floor the entrance hall is commanded by the superintendent, whose apartments are on the left, while on the right the store room and cooks' apartments occupy about the same space. Immediately in front of the entrance are the stairs (of fire-proof construction), which lead to the three stories of sleeping berths. On the left of the stairs is a good-sized lavatory for day use.

The *Coffee-room*, 45 feet by 35 feet, faces the entrance hall, and extends to the back of the building, having communication on one side with a large reading-room, and on the other with a kitchen for the use of the inmates. It is lofty, and divided into aisles by iron columns supporting an open roof of stained timbers, stop-chamfered,—lighted by a large central window, two smaller side windows, and sheets of rough plate glass in the whole extent of the roof. This room, a very handsome apartment, is fitted up with boxes round three sides, containing tables and seats, and is warmed by hot-water pipes. A cook's bar opens into a coffee-room, for the supply of coffee, &c. The *Reading-room*, 60 feet by 21 feet 9 inches, is warmed by open fires, and has the *Library* at one end: it will be furnished with some of the daily papers and popular periodicals.

The *Kitchen*, 45 feet by 21 feet 9 inches, contains two ranges, and hot-water tanks, a sink supplied with cold water, and the common apparatus for cooking purposes. The floor is formed of the metallic lava. From this kitchen a stone staircase leads to a portion of the basement containing 234 small larders or safes, with lock on each; they are raised on brick piers, and placed in ranges back to back, with space for ventilation. The key, in each case, fits the locker in the bed compartment bearing the same number.

The *Cook's Shop* is connected with the men's kitchen by a bar, where it is intended that cooked provisions may be obtained at almost any hour of the day by those who do not care to cook their own.

The *Three Upper Stories* are fitted with sleeping compartments on each side of a central corridor, formed by framing of sufficient height; each compartment measures 8 feet by 4 feet 6 inches, and is lighted by half a window; the upper portion opens, and this is hung on centres: each contains an iron bedstead, and suitable furniture; a locker for linen and clothes, with a false bottom, between which and the floor is a space for the admission of fresh air, that can be regulated at pleasure. The door of each compartment is secured by a spring latch lock, of which each lodger has the key.* On each floor are lavatories, fitted up with cast-iron enamelled basins set in slate fittings; also water-closets for night use. The partitions forming the sleeping compartments are kept below the ceiling, for the purpose of ventilation, and the central passage has a window at each end, to insure a thorough draft when necessary.

For the general *ventilation*, the principal agent is a shaft, which rises nearly 100 feet: into this several of the smoke flues of the building are conveyed, and by this means a powerful upward current is maintained. The sleeping apartments and other principal rooms are connected by vitiated air flues with the ventilating shaft, and the current is to be regulated at pleasure by means of dampers placed under the control of the superintendent. There are large cisterns in the roof, and smaller ones in other parts of the building, to afford an ample supply of water to every part of the premises; and every floor has an opening, secured by an iron door, into a dust shaft, communicating with a dust cellar in the basement. The whole building is lighted with gas. The amount of the contract was 9,560*l*. The building appears to be an honest, sound construction, creditable alike to Mr. Beck and the contractor.

We should mention that the rent to be paid by each lodger in advance is 3*s*. per week, for which each inmate, besides his sleeping apartment, will have the use of the coffee-room, reading-room, and the public kitchen, where he may cook his own food; or, as we have said, he can obtain ready-dressed provisions from the cook. Every lodger has free access to the washhouse at certain times of the day, and can, by the payment of a small sum, have a hot or cold bath.

Of the adjoining range of buildings for sixty families, now in course of erection, we may take another opportunity to speak.

It is surprising to those who do not know how often the public must be told a thing before they will hear it, that after the length of time which has elapsed since the Association was established, and the expense incurred in advertisements, it should still be little known, and that all houses of the description hitherto erected should be termed only as "models," and erected "with funds raised from the donations of the charitable." It does not seem understood that this association partakes quite of the commercial character, being a Joint-stock Company, having a capital of 100,000*l*., in 4,000 shares of 25*l*. each, though, at the same time, the interest of the class sought to be benefited is protected by the charter, limiting the dividends at any time to be paid to 5*l*. per cent., any surplus being directed to be applied in extension of the object,—a direction which goes to *fortify* the investment. The association has already paid one dividend.

From a statement forwarded to us by Mr. Charles Gatliff, the secretary of the association, it seems that the *Société des Cités Ouvrières*, now beginning operations in Paris, have grown out of this.

We shall look to "the Artisan's Home" with much solicitude, and trust to find it work out as beneficially as we anticipate it will. It offers to its inmates all those advantages, and more, on a scale suited to their means, which a west-end club affords to those in a higher walk. We are not quite satisfied with the name given to the lodgings, because we do not think it likely to make them so popular as we wish. Our artisans are a sturdy, independent race (and we like them the better for being so), who would not live under any roof which implied the receipt of *charity*. It is most important, therefore, to avoid the possibility of such a notion attaching in the remotest degree to the Spicer-street lodgings, and we would rather, therefore, that they had been called "Carlisle-street," "Ebrington-buildings," or "Howard-place," giving every inhabitant his own number.

Every man who thinks of moving there to live may feel assured that he is going to pay fairly, we will even say amply, for the advantages afforded, and that he simply has a Company for landlord instead of an individual. This, we think, cannot be too generally understood. The same advantages will probably be given, we have little doubt, for even less

* A meeting was held last week, in the parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, the Rev. H. Mackonochie, the vicar, in the chair, "for the purpose of considering the necessity of taking measures for promoting the improvement of the dwellings of the labouring classes resident in that parish. It was resolved,—"That taking into consideration the suffering and privations during the prevalence of the recent epidemic, arising in a great measure from the absence of proper accommodation, and the unhealthy condition of the dwellings of the labouring classes, this meeting is of opinion that it is highly desirable and necessary that measures should be taken for improving the habitations of the industrial classes in this parish;" and a committee was appointed to inquire and report.

† Two hundred and thirty-four were congregated together!" said a French visitor there the other day, "why, in Paris, they would make a revolution." We have no such fear in London.

‡ The engineer for boiler, warming apparatus, &c., was Mr. Reeve, of Albion-street, Caledonian-road.

* These locks are so constructed that in no one wing do two have fit.

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